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Security Council

Fifty-third Year

Provisional

3921st Meeting

Friday, 28 August 1998, 11.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Türk	(Slovenia)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Felicio
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Thiebaud
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Touray
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mrs. Odera
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

98-85713 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Austria, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ghalib (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Manz (Austria), Mr. Saha (India), Mr. Nejad Husseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan), Mr. Oussoupov (Kyrgyzstan), Mr. Akbar (Pakistan), Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Mr. Vural (Turkey) and Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/1998/810, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Costa Rica, France, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uzbekistan.

The first speaker is the representative of Austria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is gravely concerned at the latest fighting and at the escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan. We have always held the view that there is no military solution to this conflict, and that only a political settlement aimed at the establishment of a fully representative, broad-based transitional government, can lead to peace and reconciliation. We therefore call on all factions to agree an immediate ceasefire and enter negotiations under United Nations auspices.

The fighting is again causing enormous suffering for the Afghan people and adds to their misery, while human rights, fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law continue to be violated with impunity. We are deeply concerned at new reports of the killing, harassment and displacement of innocent civilians. The European Union is particularly concerned about the situation of the civilian population of the Hazarajat region, where tens of thousands have already been at risk as a result of severe food shortages in the last few months. We are very anxious about the consequences of the latest fighting for the Hazara and strongly urge the Taliban to refrain from all acts of indiscriminate violence, especially against civilians, and from using humanitarian aid as a weapon against the civilian population.

The European Union strongly condemns the armed attack against two staff members of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan on 21 August 1998 in Kabul, which caused the death of an Italian national and left a French national injured. The European Union urges the Taliban in Kabul to take immediate steps to investigate this heinous crime and to keep the United Nations informed of the results of the investigation, as requested by the Secretary-General in his statement of 24 August [press release SG/SM/6681]. The European Union reiterates its strong concern for the security of United Nations personnel, other related personnel, and personnel of non-governmental organizations in

Afghanistan, and recalls the responsibility of all factions to ensure their safety, security and freedom of movement.

The European Union expresses its deep concern at reports of the capture by Taliban militia of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and at the fate of its personnel and other Iranian nationals, who have been missing since then. The European Union wishes to underline that the obligations ensuing from the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and on Consular Relations have universal effect and are to be observed under all circumstances. The European Union urges all parties concerned, in particular the Taliban, to help in finding these missing people and in securing their safe passage out of Afghanistan.

The European Union strongly deplores the fact that third parties, instead of using their influence on the warring factions to support the efforts of the United Nations to restore peace, continue to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs in a destructive manner by supplying the factions with weapons, fuel, arms, ammunition and other materials for military use. We are also concerned by reports of involvement of military personnel from outside the country.

In this connection, the European Union wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. It strongly urges that all kinds of strategic and military support to Afghan factions, including involvement of foreign military personnel, must cease. Furthermore, the European Union considers it imperative that all countries with an influence on the parties should exercise this influence in a positive and constructive manner, in support of the United Nations peace efforts. We also continue to enforce the embargo on the export of arms, munitions and military equipment provided for in the European Union's Common Position of 17 December 1996 on Afghanistan and urge other countries to adopt a similar policy of restraint.

The European Union is deeply concerned at the various restrictions of access imposed on United Nations humanitarian agencies and international humanitarian organizations which have been operating in Afghanistan, and in particular by the measures which the Taliban have taken in this regard. We deplore the decision by the Taliban in Kabul to forcefully close the offices of international non-governmental organizations, expel foreign workers and imprison non-governmental organizations' local personnel. These decisions have forced the non-governmental organizations to abandon their much-needed help for the innocent civilian population of Kabul, which now has to suffer the consequences.

The European Union is the major donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. But for the reasons I have mentioned, the European Commission had to suspend common funding by the Community for projects in Kabul. We have helped the Afghan people through years of suffering and conflict, and we earnestly desire to continue helping them. However, aid can continue only where it can be delivered in an effective and principled manner, without discrimination, and where humanitarian organizations are able to carry out their work freely and safely. In this regard, the European Union fully supports United Nations efforts to resolve the crisis in Kabul and to ensure adequate conditions for the delivery of aid, in cooperation with other international humanitarian organizations.

With regard to mine-clearance programmes in Afghanistan, the European Union urges all Afghan parties to support and participate in these programmes. Furthermore, the European Union reiterates its appeal to the Afghan factions to put a complete halt to the use of landmines, which continue to take a very heavy toll on innocent civilians.

The European Union remains gravelly concerned at persistent human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law in Afghanistan. We are also deeply concerned about the situation of displaced persons in the country, whose number is growing.

The European Union calls on all Afghan factions, in particular the Taliban, to recognize, protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms — including the right to life, liberty and security of persons — and to respect fully the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been repeatedly endorsed by the international community, including Afghanistan.

The European Union denounces the continuing discrimination against girls and women in Afghanistan. We urge Afghan factions, in particular the Taliban, to end discriminatory policies and to recognize, protect and promote the equal rights and dignity of men and women, including access to education and health facilities, employment outside the home, personal security and freedom from intimidation and harassment. The European Union will continue to point out the implications of discriminatory policies on the distribution of aid.

The conflict in Afghanistan continues to threaten peace, security and stability in the whole region. By creating favourable conditions for the illicit production and trafficking of drugs, as well as for terrorist bases and training camps, the conflict's repercussions reach far beyond Afghanistan and its neighbours. They cause serious damage to member States of the European Union and many countries elsewhere.

The European Union is therefore committed to reinforce the fight against illegal drugs and terrorism in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the European Union will take account of drug control objectives when considering contributions to development aid. The European Union reiterates its call upon all factions, in particular the Taliban, to close down training camps for foreign terrorists inside Afghanistan and to participate in and support international efforts to combat terrorism.

As expressed in our Common Position of 26 January 1998, the European Union is determined to play an effective role in efforts to stop the fighting and to restore peace, stability and respect for human rights and international principles in Afghanistan.

Let me also, in conclusion, reiterate the European Union's continuing commitment to use all its influence to bring about a sustainable peace in Afghanistan, put an end to foreign intervention and encourage inter-Afghan dialogue, in particular through support for the central role of the United Nations.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akbar (Pakistan): As the Pakistan delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, allow me to begin by extending our congratulations to you for your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month.

Coming to the subject which is under discussion today, the Security Council is considering the issue of Afghanistan at a time of significant and far-reaching developments in that country.

The noble Afghan people had hoped to see the restoration of peace after a decade of Soviet occupation of their country. They wanted to rebuild their nation from the rubble of destruction caused by prolonged foreign occupation. Unfortunately, the fulfilment of their dream still remains distant and elusive due to internal strife among Afghans following the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Indeed, the suffering has gone on too long for a valiant and resolute people who have been instrumental in drawing a new course for international politics at the twilight of the cold war. They deserve a respite. There must be an end to their despair and misery.

It is a fact that no other country has suffered more from the conflict in Afghanistan than Pakistan. As a consequence of continued instability in Afghanistan, Pakistan today continues to host more than 1.5 million refugees. We stand almost single-handed in looking after these refugees, in the face of donor fatigue and the indifference of the international community to their plight. Pakistan has also been the victim of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan.

Like the Afghans themselves, our dream is to see peace established in Afghanistan without any further bloodshed. Pakistan's consistent policy has been the promotion of a peaceful and negotiated settlement in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been the only country which has engaged with all the sides in the conflict.

Soon after assuming office in February 1997, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, launched an Afghan peace initiative. This culminated in the meeting of a steering committee in April this year at Islamabad for the purpose of working out the modalities for an ulema convention that would discuss the problems of Afghanistan in accordance with the shariah and the traditions of the country. While significant progress was made by the steering committee, the process was derailed by minor differences among the Afghan parties.

Not discouraged by this setback, we subsequently made a number of efforts, together with Iran, under the aegis of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations. Unfortunately, those efforts did not yield any positive results.

I now turn to some recent developments in Afghanistan. Pakistan firmly believes that while the military fortunes or misfortunes of any of the parties are purely an internal affair of the Afghan people, the new ground realities cannot be ignored by the international community. We must be pragmatic in our approach to and understanding of the situation of profound magnitude that has emerged.

Pakistan believes that there is now a distinct possibility of the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. We are encouraged by the positive pronouncements made recently by the Afghan authorities in Kabul that, first, they would grant amnesty to all who surrender; secondly, their agenda was purely domestic and posed no threat to any neighbouring country; and thirdly, the local commanders were under strict instructions not to indulge in revenge killings.

It is our earnest hope that the countries sharing a border with Afghanistan, instead of raising alarms over an imaginary threat, will join Pakistan in promoting peace and harmony in Afghanistan. We must shed our biases and avail ourselves of the window of opportunity in seeking a realistic and practicable solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

The recent air strikes by the United States in Afghanistan against alleged terrorist targets are likely to complicate the situation. This action has caused deep indignation, irrespective of the motives behind the air strikes. The violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan cannot but be a matter of grave concern.

Terrorism, and the suffering that is caused by the loss of innocent lives, is a heinous crime. We condemn the terrorist acts against the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and feel the deepest sympathy for the bereaved families. Pakistan itself has been a victim of repeated acts of terrorism, including State-sponsored terrorism planned and executed from across the border. Therefore, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world in the firmest condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and in calling for its total eradication.

In dealing with terrorism, recourse to any means other than established principles and international norms is likely to have a negative effect. It could spiral out of control and further complicate matters in a vicious circle of action and retaliation.

It is a historical fact that the people of Afghanistan have never tolerated foreign interference in their internal affairs. Nor have they ever pardoned those who have violated their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The result of any adventurism or mis-adventurism, therefore, would be no different from that of the earliest invasions.

Pakistan has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Some countries and Government-controlled media have recently launched an orchestrated campaign of vilification against Pakistan, which is unfortunate. We have repeatedly and categorically rejected any involvement in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. I should like to reiterate our rejection of these allegations as ridiculous and baseless.

We reject any finger-pointing aimed at deflecting the ground realities. In the recent past, our diplomatic missions and personnel in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif have come under severe attack. The Pakistan Embassy in Kabul was burnt, and the Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif was ransacked. We lost one of our Embassy personnel. Our Ambassador in Kabul was manhandled. We did not point an accusing finger at any country. Similarly, we deplore any vilification campaign targeted at Pakistan.

Pakistan is deeply concerned over the reported disappearance of some Iranian diplomats from Mazar-e-Sharif. At the request of Iran, we have approached the Kabul authorities at the highest level. However, I must stress that Pakistan's role and ability to ensure the safety of the Iranian diplomats must not be overestimated, particularly because we did not have any presence in Mazar-e-Sharif at the time it was captured by the Kabul forces.

The time has now come for the international community to engage with the authorities in Kabul. The United Nations must come to terms with the ground realities in Afghanistan. It must increase its credibility as a mediator. Hence, there is now an urgent need for the opening of an effective channel of communication with the true representatives of Afghanistan and its people. Their views must be heard.

The people of Afghanistan are in need of substantial humanitarian supplies to sustain their lives. The international community must listen to the cry of the distressed people of that country. The United Nations agencies and the Member States must provide, on a priority basis, all possible financial, technical and material assistance without any preconditions. In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement between the Kabul authorities and the United Nations facilitating the resumption of the activities of the United Nations agencies and the international organizations in most parts of Afghanistan, including Kabul.

The international community also has a responsibility in helping the Afghans to rebuild their war-ravaged country. We must contribute generously to the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and to the rehabilitation of the refugees, as this would demonstrate to them the dividends of peace.

In conclusion, Pakistan appeals to the international community to accord formal recognition to the Government in Kabul. The Afghanistan seat at the United Nations must be assumed by the true representatives of the people of that country. The non-existing regime of northern Afghanistan should cease to occupy the United Nations seat forthwith.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Tajikistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Republic of Tajikistan has actively supported the idea of the adoption of a special resolution of the Security Council on Afghanistan and is one of the co-sponsors of the draft. We welcome the Council's readiness to discuss the dangerous development of the situation in Afghanistan and possible steps to redress it.

It is by no means a matter of indifference to Tajikistan as to the kind of situation that has existed recently in neighbouring Afghanistan in connection with the approach of hostilities directly to our border.

Our concern derives from an analysis of the real facts. The leadership of the Taliban movement has been banking on a military solution to the Afghan problem with the direct and massive support from outside, and this cannot fail to be a source of apprehension regarding possible armed actions by the Taliban on the Tajik-Afghan border. We are profoundly concerned over the reports from Afghanistan regarding new, glaring violations of human rights and international law there, including international humanitarian law. We do not exclude the possibility of an uncontrollable surge of Afghan refugees into our country. We are seriously concerned by the genuine transformation of Afghanistan into an exporter of terrorism and drugs.

We are convinced that the recent events in the north of Afghanistan confirm the timeliness of the decision to establish a Russia-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan "troika" to counteract religious extremism. Support from the territory of the Islamic State of Afghanistan of various types of extremist forces in Tajikistan can have a highly negative effect on the peace process in our country.

The Government of Tajikistan, based on the fact that the external threat must not undermine the process of national reconciliation, has undertaken measures to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border in those areas in particular danger. In cooperation with partners from the Commonwealth of Independent States, we are doing everything in our power to protect our common interests and security.

We agree with many of the assessments of the present situation in Afghanistan. For our part, we would like to emphasize that the recent events in Afghanistan have time and again clearly highlighted the impossibility of resolving the Afghan conflict by force. No matter how impressive military victories of one or another of the parties to the conflict may seem, they can only lead to a new, more dangerous and even harsher spiral of armed confrontation and make even more remote the prospects for the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

We believe that in the present situation, the United Nations must, in fact, reaffirm its leading role in efforts to settle the Afghan crisis. There is a need for urgent, practical steps on the part of the United Nations aimed at stepping up assistance for a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

Tajikistan, as a member of the group of neighbours and friends of Afghanistan, the Six plus Two group, is ready to support those efforts and to do everything in its power to see that the Afghan groups immediately reach agreement on a ceasefire and engage in serious negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations on ways to achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict on the basis of the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In our view, there is now a need to hold in the region high-level meetings of representatives of States members of the Six plus Two group, at which it will be possible to consider a concrete plan for a settlement to the conflict. Tajikistan could render the necessary assistance in holding such a meeting.

In our view, the resolution being adopted today by the Security Council contains a powerful political momentum which should exert the appropriate impact on

all of the Afghan parties and on the States on which it has a bearing. We hope that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, with the support of interested States, will convey this message to those to whom it is addressed so that the peace process at last will replace the endless round of wars and conflicts on the land of the brotherly Afghan people.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Saha (India): It is my privilege to address the Security Council under your presidency, Sir.

I'll begin by conveying our deep sympathy for the people of Afghanistan. The continuing war has brought immense suffering to them for almost two decades. The fighting which took place this summer, despite appeals and warnings from the international community, has compounded their misery. We are disturbed by reports that human rights have been violated on a large scale, in particular through the killing of children, women and POWs. We expect that the next report of the Secretary-General will give us a fuller picture of what has so far appeared in snatches in the media.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan are in our security interest, as they are for almost all of Afghanistan's neighbours. We have always respected the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We are particularly concerned, therefore, that all the evidence points to a de facto invasion of Afghanistan by foreign military forces, in support of the Taliban. It also worries us that the fighting is both exploiting and heightening ethnic differences. If this continues, the unity and independence of Afghanistan will be in danger, and if Afghanistan unravels, the impact will be felt throughout the region.

There is an Afghan personality which transcends ethnic consciousness. The international community must sustain and strengthen that personality, not widen ethnic cleavages. A genuine power-sharing arrangement in which all Afghan people are represented must take hold if peace is to return. Territorial gains won through force, trickery or bribery will be short lived if the people who live there are alienated or, as has increasingly been the case, brutalized.

There have been many debates in the Council, in the General Assembly and in meetings organized by the United Nations, where we have heard statements deploring foreign interference in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General has rightly pointed out in his report [S/1998/532] on the situation in Afghanistan dated 19 June 1998 that this is the key to ending the Afghan tragedy. Does the international community, and in particular this Council, have the resolve to take steps that would stop the continuing foreign interference, through the provision of arms, supplies and advisers to the warring factions, and of late, through the direct participation in the fighting of foreign military personnel?

The anarchy in Afghanistan has drawn terrorist groups to it. Though the events of the last few weeks have brought international focus to this aspect of the Afghan problem, for years it has been known that the most ruthless terrorist organizations have used Afghanistan as a base to recruit, train and harbour operatives who were sent out to carry out atrocities abroad. The responsibility for allowing the Afghan territory to be used for training international terrorists falls on those who give them sanctuary.

This is an issue of particular concern to us, as India has been the victim of state-sponsored, cross-border terrorism in a most vicious form. We have, on many occasions, drawn the world's attention to the presence of the training camps in our immediate neighbourhood, in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Afghanistan, where terrorists are trained and equipped to carry out merciless, violent and subversive activities in India, in particular in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The international community has unfortunately been silent or indifferent to these developments and unable to agree on concerted efforts to tackle the menace of international terrorism, in our region or elsewhere.

The crisis in Afghanistan has three main elements. The first is the continuing war, fomented and sustained by foreign interference. The second is that Afghanistan has been turned into a haven for international terrorism. The third is the lack of respect for international norms and human rights in the areas controlled by the Taliban.

On the first element, the countries that have instigated and participated in the Afghan fighting should realize that a resolution can come only through peaceful means, in direct negotiations between Afghan factions under United Nations auspices, aimed at achieving mutually acceptable solutions that accommodate the rights

and interests of all ethnic, religious and political groups of Afghan society. These countries should encourage the factions whom they support to return to the negotiating table without delay and preconditions, and cooperate with the aim of creating a broad-based and fully representative Government which would protect the rights of all Afghans and observe the international obligations of Afghanistan.

On the second issue, the international community perhaps now realizes the magnitude and the ramifications of the problem caused by the presence and activities of foreign mercenaries and their foreign patrons, who have not only destabilized Afghanistan but also made it a seminary for international terrorists. However, selective unilateral action cannot solve the problem of international terrorism. Only an effective international cooperative effort to identify and act against those responsible for international terrorism — whether individual terrorist groups or States — will succeed.

On the third issue, a condemnation of the violation of international norms of conduct is not sufficient. The international community must act together now to mobilize the human rights machinery to ensure the observance of internationally recognized human rights in all of Afghanistan. The perpetrators of gross and systematic violations of human rights must not be given the international legitimacy they crave. This would be an appropriate message to convey as we prepare to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation in Afghanistan, which is alarming on both political and humanitarian grounds. We have full confidence in your ability and diplomatic skills to steer the work of the Council successfully so that it can fulfil its obligation under the Charter in the face of this threat to regional and international peace and security. I also wish to thank Ambassador Sergey Lavrov for his leadership of the Council in July.

The escalation of conflict and tension and the further spread of lawlessness resulting from the recent military offensive to the north of Afghanistan by the Taliban has justifiably caused grave concern for most neighbours of Afghanistan and for the rest of the international community. This concern stems from the display of absolute disregard by the Taliban for the wishes of the international community, as manifested by the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for the rejection of further bloodshed and the attempt to find a political settlement in which the views of all Afghan people are taken into account. The international concern also stems from the recognition of the time-honoured fact that Afghanistan, as a country with a multi-ethnic, multicultural and fiercely independent population, cannot be ruled by a single group, particularly when that group is widely believed to have been organized, supported and patronized by foreign powers.

The Afghan people have made it amply clear in their history that they will not tolerate direct or indirect foreign domination, no matter what the cost. This is where the problem lies. Otherwise, it should make little difference to Afghanistan's neighbours or to the rest of the world which group rules the country as long as it respects the basic principles of human rights and the rules of inter-State relations.

It may be trite to say so, but trite or not, we continue to believe that the problem in Afghanistan has no military solution and that persisting to seek a military victory will only perpetuate the internecine violence in that war-torn country and will fail, and fail miserably, to bring peace and normalcy to the deserving people of Afghanistan. In our opinion as a neighbour, even if the Taliban succeed in getting control of the entire land of Afghanistan, they will not be able to rule over all the Afghan people, who are of different ethnic backgrounds and political and religious persuasions. Unfortunately, therefore, the problems in Afghanistan will continue to plague the Afghan people, the region and elsewhere.

Very little is known about the record, background and operations of the Taliban in the recent political history of Afghanistan before they suddenly surfaced as a well-equipped and well-financed militia group in Afghanistan. Their emergence and their mode of operation have raised serious questions — for the Afghan people and for the region — about their independence and future agenda. The reports of foreign assistance to the Taliban in the form not only of the supply of arms and

ammunition, but also of logistics, planning and foreign military personnel in the last few years, and particularly during the recent Taliban offensive, have strengthened the general suspicions about them. They are ostensibly students of religion who have now learned to fight, drive tanks and fly jet fighters and helicopters. That is a proposition that other people in Afghanistan and the region find difficult to believe. The Taliban's history and emergence are suspicious, but their practice since then is disconcerting and outright threatening.

The daily reports of abuse and gross violations of human rights, particularly against women and girls in the name of Islam; the murders and constant harassment of foreign relief workers and United Nations staff; the forced displacement of the Afghan people on ethnic and religious grounds, which has been referred to as Taliban-style ethnic cleansing; the daily and indiscriminate bombardments of civilians and defenceless people in Bamian and Hazarajat where the Taliban have blocked the transit of urgent foodstuffs and other humanitarian aid for months, leading to massive starvation and death; the unbridled cultivation of and traffic in drugs to meet the increasing demand for cash to pay for Taliban offensive operations; and the harbouring and instigation of terrorist elements and terrorist organizations are routine and reflect the status of the Taliban and the conditions under which the Afghan people continue to resist. These issues are quite worrisome to the international community, and they destabilize and threaten the region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, a country we would like to see continue its proud heritage of political independence and non-alignment. The fate of Afghanistan will be determined by the Afghan people themselves. They will have to make the political decision to opt for peace. Peace cannot be imposed on Afghanistan from abroad or by outside forces. In this connection, the Islamic Republic of Iran, like most other neighbours of Afghanistan and the rest of the international community, earnestly believes that as long as a lasting peace has not been achieved in Afghanistan — a peace which can be achieved only through political negotiation under United Nations auspices and with the help of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), leading to the establishment of a Government that is representative of all the Afghan people — the world as a whole, and the neighbouring countries in particular, will continue to suffer and be threatened as a result of a number of continuing and heightened problems.

As a neighbour, Iran is seriously concerned about the following threats: first, continued violence close to its borders; secondly, the danger of violence and conflict spilling over into its territory; thirdly, the danger of the flow of more refugees as a result of the escalation of the conflict and of displacement by the Taliban of groups of the Afghan population on ethnic and religious grounds; fourthly, the escalation of drug cultivation and trafficking to and through the region to meet the increasing demand for financing Taliban military offensives and rule by force; and fifthly, the continued presence and activities of terrorist elements and terrorist organizations in that country.

In the light of these destabilizing dangers and in order to send a strong message to the Taliban that their pursuit of a military solution is not acceptable to the international community, and that they will continue to be viewed unfavourably as long as they disregard the wish of the international community and the call by the United Nations for a political settlement in which the interests of all Afghan groups are taken into account, my Government co-sponsored the draft resolution under consideration in the Council.

My Government has a greater stake in this draft resolution. The plight of the personnel of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif, of the correspondent of the Islamic Republic News Agency and of many Iranian relief workers continues. The capture of the Iranian Consulate-General and the abduction of its personnel by the Taliban have been condemned by many States as gross violations of the basic principles and recognized norms of international law.

I would like to refer to Security Council document S/1998/776 of 19 August 1998, in which the circumstances of the capture of the Consulate by the Taliban offensive forces in Mazar-e-Sharif and the names of the Iranian captives are set out. I wish to add that the taped conversation between the head of our Consulate-General in Mazar-e-Sharif and the Foreign Ministry in Tehran when the Consulate was captured by the Taliban forces at 14.30 hours on 8 August is available. The sound of automatic-rifle fire can clearly be heard in the background.

I wish to stress that the continued detention of the Iranian nationals by the Taliban is unacceptable to the Islamic Republic of Iran. We certainly hope that the demand by the Security Council for their immediate

release and safe and dignified passage out of Afghanistan is heeded by them. We call upon other Governments to do more and to use whatever influence they may have over the Taliban to persuade them to release the Iranian captives without further delay. We are grateful to the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Brahimi, for their efforts to secure the release of the Iranian captives, and we call upon them to redouble their efforts in this humanitarian issue.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): There seems to be no end to the tragic suffering of the Afghan people, and the recent developments have compounded this painful situation. In addition to the extensive human suffering and destruction, the current situation poses a growing threat to regional and international security. That is why my delegation and Government share the grave concern expressed in the draft resolution presented to the Security Council.

Turkey has deep-rooted historical and cultural bonds with the people of Afghanistan and with its neighbours. The painful situation on the ground and its implications are felt very deeply in Turkey by the Turkish people and Government.

Information regarding human rights violations, especially against women and girls, in the area under the control of the Taliban, the execution of civilians and prisoners of war, efforts to change the demographic structure of Afghanistan, and the displacement of populations from North to South are extremely worrying. These acts are deplorable. Crimes against United Nations personnel and the situation of the members of the Consulate-General of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif must be urgently addressed.

Turkey is also concerned for Afghanistan's neighbours. Their suffering from drug trafficking, the influx of refugees and political tension originating from the crisis in Afghanistan seems to be increasing. The political atmosphere in the region has begun to deteriorate. Such a trend could impair overall stability in the region.

The recent military campaign of the Taliban cannot be a substitute for a political solution. Military victories achieved with external support are an illusion. They can provide neither a lasting nor a viable solution. This is a lesson learned from the history of Afghanistan over the last few centuries. A political dialogue among the Afghan people is as necessary as ever. A broad-based government in which all groups are represented remains the only instrument that can lead the country to a lasting peace.

Collective diplomatic efforts, with the United Nations in the central role, continue to be the most efficient instrument to encourage the Afghan parties to participate in dialogue and achieve a solution. The failure of the very valuable efforts made last spring by the United Nations and by a number of interested countries should not discourage the international community. Enhanced bilateral diplomatic activity between the interested countries can also contribute to the process. The Organization of the Islamic Conference should maintain its useful cooperation with the United Nations regarding Afghanistan.

It is my delegation's belief that today's draft resolution is a good framework on which future diplomatic activities can be based. It includes almost all the elements which can lead the Afghan parties to a way out of the deadlock. Initial political dialogue among the parties, aiming at a broad-based government, should be followed by the consideration of concrete measures. These should include the demilitarization of Afghan cities, the prevention of the supply of arms, the assignment of civilian police forces, and the dismantling of the camps harbouring extremists and terrorist elements, most of them non-Afghans.

The pledge of the international community to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan once peace is established is most valuable. The Afghan parties must seize this opportunity. Turkey remains committed to contributing to the future rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Uzbekistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan): Today, the Parliament of Uzbekistan had a meeting at which deep concern was expressed regarding the continuing military action in Afghanistan; the Parliament considered that this military action poses a major threat to international and regional

peace and security, particularly in the region of Central Asia.

We strongly support the preservation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has strong confidence that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict and that it can be settled only through peaceful negotiations among all Afghan parties. Uzbekistan calls upon those parties to refrain from further hostilities and to come to the negotiating table. The Republic of Uzbekistan is confident that all parties to the Afghan conflict should be involved in a peace process aimed at the formation of a broad-based and fully representative government of Afghanistan.

One of the main concerns of my Government is the continuing supply of arms and ammunition to the parties to the Afghan conflict and the unabated foreign interference in Afghanistan. We are also confident that it is necessary to cease such interference immediately. It is a fact that continuing instability in Afghanistan creates conditions favourable to the further spread of terrorism and the illegal production and trafficking of drugs.

We are deeply concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and hope that the Afghan parties will do everything possible to create the conditions necessary for the United Nations and other international humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to all in Afghanistan who are in need of it. We condemn violations of universally recognized norms of international law and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan in the field of the treatment of prisoners of war and non-combatants in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan believes that the United Nations must continue to play its central and impartial role in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict.

Uzbekistan reiterates its position that the activities of the Six plus Two group, one of the main mechanisms for considering the situation in Afghanistan, are very important towards the achievement of peaceful resolution of Afghan conflict. In that connection, on behalf of my Government, I would like to reaffirm the proposal of Uzbekistan that a meeting of the Six plus Two group be held in the region. We believe that such a meeting could make a positive contribution to a political settlement of the Afghan conflict. Tashkent is ready to host the meeting.

Taking into consideration all that I have said, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan supports the draft resolution on Afghanistan now before the Security Council, and requests that Uzbekistan be considered as a sponsor of the draft resolution.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Kazakhstan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Kazakhstan expresses its grave concern over the escalation of hostilities in Afghanistan. The ongoing armed conflict in that country poses a serious threat to regional and international security, and is accompanied by massive violations of human rights. One alarming symptom of this is the evacuation from Afghanistan of personnel of United Nations humanitarian agencies and other international humanitarian organizations; this could exacerbate the already drastic humanitarian situation in that country.

Kazakhstan firmly condemns the recent killing of two Afghan staff members of the World Food Programme and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Jalalabad, and of the Military Adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan in Kabul.

We also share the serious concern of the Member States of the United Nations regarding the fate of the diplomats and staff members of the Consulate General of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and other Iranian citizens seized in Afghanistan.

On 15 August, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, made a special statement in which he called on the Afghan parties to the conflict to cease hostilities. The head of our Government voiced the hope that the conflict would not extend beyond the borders of Afghanistan. In case of the emergence of a threat to the external borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in that region, Kazakhstan — together with the States parties to the Treaty on Collective Security of the CIS — retains the right to undertake all necessary measures to strengthen the security of the external borders of the Commonwealth within the framework of that Treaty.

In its practical actions regarding the situation in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan bases itself on the need to agree

upon all actions with the States parties that attended the meeting held in Almaty on 4 October 1996.

The current events in Afghanistan seriously threaten to destabilize the situation in Central Asia. Therefore, on the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan, on 22 August 1998 a meeting was held in Tashkent of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, during which they discussed issues linked to the exacerbation of the situation in Afghanistan and its possible impact on the region of Central Asia.

In supporting the efforts of the United Nations aimed at the cessation of the conflict in Afghanistan and the preservation of Afghanistan's territorial integrity, Kazakhstan expresses its firm commitment to the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on Afghanistan. Throughout the conflict in Afghanistan our country has consistently favoured having the United Nations play the central role in a settlement. This position of Kazakhstan remains unchanged. Kazakhstan firmly condemns any foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and supports the appeal for an immediate cessation of the delivery of military supplies from outside and halting active military support to the factions in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan is in favour of a speedy, peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. In our view, only by taking into account and respecting the interests of the various ethnic, religious and political groups in Afghanistan can we ensure the stability of the political system, as is attested to by the history of that country. Allow me once again to express the hope that this discussion of the question of Afghanistan in the Security Council will yield positive results for the settlement of the conflict and will assist in putting an end to a war that has gone on for many years.

The President: The representative of Pakistan has asked for the floor. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akbar (Pakistan): We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for giving us the floor for a second time to set the record straight on a matter of crucial importance to the Security Council itself, to Pakistan and to the international community. The matter to which we are referring has been under consideration by the Security Council for the last 50 years. We deeply regret that another effort was made by India today to distort the facts, which are well known to the Security Council, as it has been the guardian of its own resolutions which it passed 50 years ago.

We would like to remind the Council that, in accordance with its resolutions of 50 years ago, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory. The Council had promised the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir that they would exercise their right to self-determination in a United Nations-supervised plebiscite. This promise, unfortunately, has not been fulfilled.

The Council will know that India has consistently and wilfully obstructed the will of the international community to implement the Council's resolution on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir adopted under the India/Pakistan question. India has deployed more than 600,000 troops in Indian-held Kashmir. These troops have committed the worst kinds of acts of state terrorism against the innocent people of Kashmir. International human rights organizations have catalogued those massive violations of human rights, in which women have been raped, places of religious worship have been desecrated and entire villages have been burned.

India has violated every norm of international behaviour in its ruthless campaign to suppress and eliminate the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people and to keep those people under subjugation. It has also extended its acts of terrorism beyond its territory.

We strongly denounce any effort to distort these facts.

The President: The representative of Afghanistan has asked for the floor. I call on him now.

Mr. Ghalib (Afghanistan): What we heard from the Pakistani delegation is nothing but a commitment to the pursuit of a policy of intervention and hegemony based on Pakistan's attitude of blatancy and impunity towards Afghanistan. Taking into account the fact that in the international community there is no longer any kind of ambiguity over the situation in Afghanistan — particularly in the wake of the recent developments in Afghanistan which have fairly framed Pakistan's manifested military involvement in Afghanistan one way or another — my delegation will refrain from further explanations.

It will suffice to say that some of the elements killed in the recent United States missile strikes on the terrorist camps in eastern Afghanistan have been identified by

both intelligence sources and the world news media as Pakistani nationals, either plain-clothes army officers of the Pakistani Government or members of the organizations based in Pakistan evidently engaged in terrorist activities worldwide. With all this in mind, it comes as no surprise to any of us why Pakistan continues to preach that the international community should accord recognition to their mercenaries in Afghanistan, the Taliban.

My delegation cannot conclude without associating itself with the common views expressed by the Member States in their belief that only an immediate halt to the Pakistani interventions in Afghanistan, and thereby the establishment of a broad-based, fully representative Government in the country, will lead to an early return of lasting peace and civility to Afghanistan.

The President: In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 12.50 p.m.